

REMARKS

As a preliminary, Applicant and Applicant's representative thank the Examiner for the telephone interview which was held on June 2, 2005.

By the present amendment, claims 1 and 10 have been amended to recite that the protective sheets have an intrinsic tendency to curl, and claim 10 has been additionally amended to clarify that curling directions of said pair of protective sheets would be reverse to each other upon separation if said pair of protective sheets were separated from said polarizing plate.

Also, claim 8 has been amended to be dependent on claim 6 instead of claim 1.

Further, new claims 14-17 have been added. Support for the added recitations is found in the original application, for example on page 30, lines 8-9 and in the Examples.

Claims 1-17 are pending in the present application. Independent claim 1, and claims 2-5 and 14-15 dependent directly or indirectly thereon, are directed to a method of producing a polarizing plate. Claim 6 is directed to a polarizing plate produced by a method defined in claim 1. Claims 7, 8, and 9 are directed to a composite polarizing plate and to an image display, and claims 7-8 depend on claim 6, and claim 9 depends on claim 7. Independent claim 10, and claims 16-17 dependent directly or indirectly thereon, are directed to a polarizing plate. Claims 11, 12, and 13 are directed to a composite polarizing plate and to an image display and depend directly or indirectly on claim 10.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 3, 4, and 6-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by US 2003/0169497A1 to Ito et al. ("Ito").

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested. The effective date of Ito under section 102(e) is its US filing date on March 7, 2003, which is later than the filing date of the Japanese application JP 2002-353560 on December 5, 2002, of which priority is claimed in the present application.

A verified English translation of the Japanese priority application is submitted with this paper. The translation confirms that the present claims are supported in the priority application, in particular in the original claims (claims 1-2 and 6-13), Fig. 1a (claims 3-4), paragraph [0025] (claim 5), and paragraphs [0052] and [0069] (claims 14-17). Accordingly, Ito is not applicable under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) against the present application.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn.

Next, in the Office Action, claims 6 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by JP 09-090344A to Sekisui Chem. Co. ("Sekisui"); and claims 7-9 and 11-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Sekisui, in view of an Official Notice.

The rejection is respectfully traversed. As discussed at the interview, it is immediately clear in the present application that the curl means that the protective sheets have intrinsic tendency to curl. In particular, the curl of the protective sheets as defined in the present application can be measured in the manner described starting on page 11, line 3 of the specification, by measuring spatial distances of a protective sheet from a flat surface after leaving it in a conditioning space for 24 hours, as explained in the specification. It is also immediately clear that the curl can be defined independently from the reason why such curl has been induced

in the protective sheet. In particular, a curl may have been induced from a producing process, for example, stretching, and/or from a storing process, for example, roll storing.

Thus, as discussed at the interview, Sekisui fails to teach or suggest laminating a pair of curled protective sheets, said protective sheets having an intrinsic tendency to curl in respective curling directions, onto opposite surfaces of a polarizer respectively so that respective curling directions of said pair of curled protective sheets are reverse to each other, as recited in present claim 1, and accordingly, Sekisui also fails to teach or suggest a polarizing plate comprising a polarizer, and a pair of protective sheets laminated onto opposite surfaces of said polarizer respectively, wherein each of said protective sheets has an intrinsic tendency to curl, such that curling directions of said pair of protective sheets would be reverse to each other upon separation if said pair of protective sheets were separated from said polarizing plate, as recited in present claim 10.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn.

Next, in the Office Action, claims 1, 3, 4, 6-8, and 10-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by US 4,292,370 to Pekko ("Pekko"), or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Pekko in view of US 2003/0230379A1 to Roubik ("Roubik"); and claims 7, 9, 11, and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Pekko in view of the Official Notice, or, in the alternative, over Pekko in view of Roubik, and further in view of the Official Notice.

The rejections are respectfully traversed. Pekko applies the protective films through opposed feed rollers (see Fig. 1 of Pekko), but as explained above, this is completely different from an intrinsic tendency to curl as in the present invention. Namely, the curve of the protective films shown in Fig. 1 of Pekko when they pass on the feed rollers is not indicative of the intrinsic tendency to curl which may have been generated, for example, by a stretching step during manufacture, or by storing in a roll.

Further, there would have been no motivation to modify Pekko by referring to Roubik, because Roubik concerns the field of thermal lamination excluding the optical field. As a result, a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to apply the teachings of Roubik regarding non-optical thermal lamination field to a polarizer's protective films.

Specifically, Roubik discloses opposing curling directions to avoid mechanical changes in the sheet due to thermal lamination. The thermal lamination is performed at a high temperature (180°F in Roubik). A person of ordinary skill in the art would expect such high temperature lamination, if applied to a polarizer, to result in deterioration of optical characteristics and unevenness of appearance (i.e., striped unevenness) as a result of change of moisture regain and film shrinkage. As a result, a person of ordinary skill in the art would understand the teachings of Roubik as applying to the high temperature lamination process of Roubik. Accordingly, that person would find no suggestion or motivation to combine Pekko and Roubik, or to refer to Roubik in an attempt to modify Pekko.

In contrast, the present inventors' contribution is to have identified that providing protective sheets having an intrinsic tendency to curl in respective curling directions, onto opposite surfaces of a polarizer respectively so that respective curling directions of said pair of curled protective sheets are reverse to each other, as recited in present claim 1, and providing a polarizing plate comprising a polarizer, and a pair of protective sheets laminated onto opposite surfaces of said polarizer respectively, wherein each of said protective sheets has an intrinsic tendency to curl, such that curling directions of said pair of protective sheets would be reverse to each other upon separation if said pair of protective sheets were separated from said polarizing plate, as recited in present claim 10, would provide a benefit in terms of the optical characteristics of the polarizing plate. This contribution of the present inventors would not have been obvious from Pekko and Roubik, since Pekko is completely silent as to a curl of protective sheets, and Roubik is not only incompatible with an optical laminate but is also completely silent as to any optical improvement to be expected from its teachings. Therefore, the present claims are not obvious over Pekko taken alone or in any combination with Roubik.

In addition, with respect to the dependent claims, Pekko and Roubik are silent as to the combinations of features recited in these respective claims. Therefore, for this respective reasons alone, the dependent claims are not obvious over Pekko and Roubik taken alone or in any combination.

In particular, with respect to dependent claims 14-17, it is submitted that since Roubik concerns high temperature thermal lamination of non-optical films, Roubik fails to teach or

Amendment
Serial No. 10/726,526
Attorney Docket No. 032153

suggest transferring teachings from its method to protective sheets that are laminated to a polarizer through an adhesive, in particular a pressure-sensitive adhesive. Therefore, for these respective reasons alone, present claims 14-17 are not obvious over Pekko and Roubik taken alone or in any combination.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejections should be withdrawn.

In conclusion, the invention as presently claimed is patentable. It is believed that the claims are in allowable condition and a notice to that effect is earnestly requested.

In the event there is, in the Examiner's opinion, any outstanding issue and such issue may be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Amendment
Serial No. 10/726,526
Attorney Docket No. 032153

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of the response period. Please charge the fee for such extension and any other fees which may be required to our Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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